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I WILL PROSECUTE ANYONE WHO DEFAMES ME: VESCO

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North American financier Robert Vesco, on his first appearance at a national press conference, stated that he will prosecute anyone who defames him. "I will do it."

He arrived at Hotel Costa Rica for his first press conference two hours late, about nine P.M.

He said, (and it was obviously apparent), "I am very angry because shortly before appearing on TV tonight false reports were circulated that criminal charges had been filed against me by the U.S. attorney general. I have just telephoned New York and I can assure you that that report is a tremendous lie."

Vesco had been accompanied to the fifth floor by a great number of people, some of them government employees and other foreigners.

"We are going to start legal action against those persons who said I had been criminally prosecuted. The politicians are taking advantage of this situation."

He added visibly angry that, "We are not going to tolerate this any longer and tomorrow (today), I will present strong charges."

He said that, "It seems as if they want to turn everything into a political issue, but what they are doing is undercutting the chances for other investors to come to this country."

"What they accomplish with their attitude is to diminish the number of new investors."

Vesco said that he will ask for the lifting of congressional immunity from some deputies to proceed with his accusation. "I will turn over to my lawyers the necessary papers for the charges."

The press conference was held standing up. Vesco who is 38 years old, appeared interested in answering questions, and at times showed a spark of good humor.

He was asked the extent of his investments in Costa Rica and to itemize them one by one.

Vesco said the amount invested in Costa Rica is, "\$25 million or more. But I have no detailed knowledge of each investment." He said that it has been invested in government bonds, housing programs, and ICE [Costa Rican Institute of Electricity].

He was asked about his trial in Costa Rica, but immediately it was explained that it was not a trial but a special commission which is carrying out an investigation.

Vesco took advantage of the incorrect phrasing of the question to say, "There is no trial, but there could be if I hit somebody on the nose if they continue to say atrocities."

He confessed that "The plan I had for Costa Rica was to invest about \$50 million. Some of these millions for example to be invested in the lumber business, but I find too many problems here," he indicated in a sorrowful tone.

He was told that there is a summons for his appearance to testify before the special legislative commission on 21 March. "I did not know that I had to appear on 21 March," he indicated. Later he asserted, "With great pleasure I will appear before the investigating commission."

The questions turned to the investigation that the Legislative Assembly is conducting about Vesco.

"It seems to me that if they are going to investigate they could ask us some questions so that we could give them some explanations and so that they could have some information. I believe that if they are investigating us they should take it under consideration."

The reporters were warned that Mr Vesco would not answer questions about the New York trial which the international press has discussed at length. The reporters were told that any question concerning the Federal Exchange Commission charges against Vesco would not be answered.

To the question about why he invests in Costa Rica or as we say around here, in exchange for what? Vesco answered philosophically, "In exchange for nothing, did I invest or want to invest in this country. My interest was to live here and settle here with my family."

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Later he said that he realized that his children cannot go to school here, and that when he telephones long distance the operators know many things because they have read it. That there is too much scandal here.

"I am free to enter, travel or leave the U.S. I have no problems in my country. I am going to return in a few days."

He avoided reference to the worldwide commentary based on information that many of his funds are the results of deals. In that respect he stated that the fact is that the U.S. resents the fact that funds are being invested in underdeveloped countries, like Costa Rica, for example. They wanted these investments to be made in the U.S.

The question as to where did his funds come from and how did he accumulate such a fortune, he avoided answering also.

About whether there are mutual funds in Costa Rica, he laconically answered, "No." But later wanting to expand on the question said that the funds came from the Bahamas, banks, real estate, his friends, etc. "But I have no detailed knowledge of the investments."

He smiled for the first time that evening when he said: "No, I am not the Messiah." He had been asked if he considered himself the Messiah of Costa Rica.

Vesco again complained about the "sensationalism in the use of his name." "There are many investors who want to come to Costa Rica, but they are going to change their minds. It is unfortunate to have such a scandal. I believe that to report news one has to make sure first of what he says or writes is true."

He had some praise for Costa Rica. "This country is beautiful. It has great natural beauty. It is a pretty place. It is too bad about the scandals."

"Of course I met with President Figueres. It would be nonsense to think I would come to Costa Rica and not meet with the Chief of State. Of course I met with him."

Vesco had words of praise for Figueres, "very courteous, very cordial. I hold him in great esteem."

After the press conference he left for his home at Escazu escorted by two cars in front and two following.

Today he departs for the U.S. and will return to testify before the Legislative Assembly Commission next 21 March.

Vesco leaves here a public relations office under the direction of Mr J. Raul Espinoza, a Puerto Rican.